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3. Q. In an April 21 letter to my colleague Bill Green, Assistant Secretary Alvin Drishler stated that the AWACS would present some risk to Israel's security. If that is so, why is this Administration willing to present any risk to Israel which contradicts our stated commitments to that country? if you deny the truth of Mr. Drishler's statement, how do you account for the disagreement between the Administration and Israel concerning the threat of these weapons?

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR
REVIEWED BY P Schmeltzer 7/2/85
EXT. DATE
REASON(S)

A. The letter to which you refer stated "while we cannot totally foreclose the possible use of U.S. equipment by Saudi Arabia against Israel, we believe the risk is small." The Saudis understand that any attack on Israel would risk their overall security relationship with the United States. They are heavily dependent on the U.S. for maintenance and logistics support for their defense forces.

There should be no question of the determination of this Administration to fulfill its commitment to Israel's security. We are confident that our strong position on the safety and well-being of Israel is well understood in Israel and among its Arab neighbors. At the same time, given the tensions and hostilities that persist between Israel and the Arab states, it must be recognized that any arms acquired by either side increase that side's capabilities to some extent, and thereby the potential threat to the other side.

The dilemma of the worsened security situation in the region is that countries that are our friends face multiple threats. The Saudis, for example, face dangers from across the Persian Gulf as well as from South Yemen and Ethiopia, both regimes heavily backed by the Soviet Union. It would do serious harm to U.S. national interests were we not to assist Saudi Arabia to meet those potential dangers.

We believe the sale of military equipment to Saudi Arabia is important in improving Saudi Arabia's air defenses and its ability to protect the oil installations which are of vital interest to the Saudis, the United States and to our friends. The Saudis have repeatedly expressed their desire to improve their military capability for defensive purposes and they have stated that they have no offensive intentions against their neighbors.

Israel has made clear its strong opposition to military sales to Arab states. We believe that there are substantial reasons for Saudi Arabia to avoid participation in a conflict with Israel even with the additional equipment under consideration in their possession. In the unlikely event that the Saudis attempted an attack on Israel, such an attack would face the highly effective Israeli air defense system. This system consists of large numbers of sophisticated aircraft such as the F-15 and F-16, as well as defensive missile and gun systems, numerous radars, and highly trained personnel. Any attempted Saudi attack on Israel, therefore, would be prohibitively costly.

Finally, we are firmly committed to maintaining Israel's qualitative superiority. We are, for instance, planning to seek Congressional approval to provide Israel with additional credits of $300 million in each of fiscal years 1983 and 1984.